

Message Text

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CINCLANT FOR POLAD
CINCEUR FOR POLAD

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI PINT AO

SUBJECT: VIOLENCE IN LUSO

1. AT 1600 ON APRIL 8 MPLA FORCES IN THE CITY OF LUSO LAUNCHED A SURPRISE ATTACK UPON A NEARBY BUILDING OCCUPIED BY FNLA. INTENSE URBAN WARFARE ENSUED FOR 16 HOURS, ENDING ONLY WHEN FNLA AND MPLA MILITARY CHIEFS ARRIVED FROM LUANDA AND ORDERED A CEASE FIRE. FNLA LOST FIVE KILLED AND SIX WOUNDED. MPLA LOSSES ARE UNKNOWN. SEVERAL BLOCKS OF LUSO CITY ARE SEVERELY DAMAGED.

2. A CONGEN OFFICER VISITING LUSO WITNESSED THE BATTLE FROM A NEARBY PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE BASE. NO OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT OR COMMUNIQUES ON THE FIGHTING WERE RELEASED IN LUSO OR LUANDA BUT THE OFFICER AND A BRITISH COLLEAGUE MADE EXTENSIVE ENQUIRIES IN LUSO AND PIECED TOGETHER THE FOLLOWING STORY.

3. MPLA, POSSIBLY EMBOLDENED BY THE RECEIPT OF NEW WEAPONS
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FROM ITS BASE AT JIMBE IN ZAMBIA, LAUNCHED A SURPRISE TWO-PRONGED

ATTACK WITH MACHINE GUNS AND ROCKET PROPELLED GRENADES (RPCS) UPON THE FNLA BARRACKS LOCATED TWO BLOCKS FROM MPLA QUARTERS, IN THE HEART OF THE SMALL RAILROAD CITY OF LUSO. FNLA RESPONDED IN KIND AND AN INTENSE FIRE-FIGHT BEGAN WHICH LASTED UNTIL 0800 OF THE NEXT DAY. DURING THE EVENING INNUMERABLE LOUD EXPLOSIONS WERE HEARD WHICH LATER PROVED TO MORTARS AND RPCS. THE FIRING WAS NEARLY CONTINUOUS AND GENERALLY INTENSE. BOTH SIDES WERE FIRING FROM CONCRETE BUILDINGS AND NO ATTEMPT AT INFANTRY ASSAULT WAS MADE BY EITHER SIDE, THUS EXPLAINING THE LOW CASUALTY FIGURES. THE PORTUGUESE MADE NO ATTEMPT TO INTERVENE. UNITA, WHOSE BARRACKS WERE LOCATED DIRECTLY BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS, DID NOT HELP EITHER SIDE AND WAS ALLOWED TO EVACUATE ITS TROOPS DURING A 15 MINUTE TRUCE EARLY IN THE BATTLE.

4. THE BATTLE ZONE IN LUSO SHOWS THE EFFECTS OF THE FIREPOWER. ALL WINDOWS WERE BLOWN OUT, MANY WALLS WERE BLASTED BY PRGS OR BAZOOKAS AND ROOFS WERE CAVED IN BY MORTARS. THE NEARBY PASSENGER TERMINAL OF THE BENGUELA RAILROAD RECEIVED TWO DIRECT HITS FROM THE MORTAR FIRED BY FNLA. THE STREETS WERE COVERED WITH PILES OF SHELL CASINGS, SPENT RPG JACKETS AND SHELL HOLES. NUMEROUS TREES ON THE ONCE SHADY STREET WERE BLOWN DOWN OR HAD ALL THE FOILAGE SHOT AWAY.

5. THE FIRE FIGHT LASTED UNTIL FNLA'S AND MPLA'S MILITARY COMMANDERS IN ANGOLA ARRIVED IN LUSO AND ORDERED THE TROOPS TO CEASE FIRE. QUARDRIPARTITE MEETINGS WERE HELD WITH THE PORTUGUESE AND UNITA TO EXTEND THE TRUCE. WHEN THE CONGEN OFFICER LEFT ON APRIL 10 THERE WAS NO FIGHTING BUT THE CITY WAS TENSE AND UNITA AND FNLA WERE NOT OPTIMISTIC OVER A CONTINUATION OF PEACE. THE WHITE MERCHANTS WERE IN THEIR SHOPS BUT THEY REFUSED TO OPEN THEIR DOORS ON APRIL 10.

6. THE BATTLE AND ITS AFTERMATH CONFIRMED SOME PATTERNS NOTED IN EARLIER LUANDA CONFRONTATIONS. THE PORTUGUESE WILL NOT SEND IN TROOPS TO STOP THE FIGHTING. UNITA WILL REMAIN ON THE SIDELINES AND TRY TO NEGOTIATE A PEACE. LARGE AMOUNTS OF AMMUNITION ARE AVAILABLE TO THE TWO ANTAGONISTS AND THEY USE IT FREELY BUT THEY WILL REFRAIN FROM COSTLY INFANTRY ASSAULTS. MOST SIGNIFICANTLY, PEACE IS ONLY RESTORED WHEN THE TWO GROUPS

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ARE READY TO STOP; THE PORTUGUESE STAND BY AND WAIT UNTIL THE SHOOTING STOPS.

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